



Locarno Official Selection  
Concorso internazionale



# ESSENTIAL TRUTHS OF THE LAKE

A FILM BY LAV DIAZ



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2023 - Drama - Philippines/France/Portugal/Singapore/Italy/Switzerland/UK

1.85 - 213 min

INTERNATIONAL PRESS

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## SYNOPSIS

When asked what drives a man to search for the truth, Lieutenant Hermes Papauran says dejectedly that maybe he just wants to keep inflicting pain on himself. Faced with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's bloody murders and brazen lies, he continues his struggle to find resolution to a fifteen-year-old case around a volcanic ash laden landscape and an impenetrable lake. It has become a cross he can barely carry but keeps lugging anyway.

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## CAST

John Lloyd Cruz  
Hazel Orencio  
Shaina Magdayao  
Bart Guingona  
Agot Isidro

Lt. Hermes Papauran  
Jane Liway  
Esmeralda Stuart  
Jack Barquero  
Colonel

## CREW

Written, Directed, Edited

Lav Diaz

Producers

Bianca Balbuena,  
Bradley Liew (Epicmedia Productions)  
Jean-Christophe Simon (Films Boutique)  
Joaquim Sapinho  
Marta Alves (Rosa Filmes)

Co-producers

Jeremiah R. Oh, Xin Ying Kang (Tier Pictures)  
Stefano Centini (Volos Films Italia)  
Dan Wechsler, Andreas Roald  
Jamal Zeinal-Zade (Bord Cadre / Sovereign Films)

DOP

Lav Diaz, Larry Manda

Sound Designer

Corinne De San Jose

Sound Recordist

Cecil Buban

Colorist

Dia Magsaysay

Art Director

Allen Alzola

Costume

Ivan Raborar

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Facing then President Rodrigo Duterte's unwarranted wrath which he unleashed with his murderous war on drugs policy that resulted to the senseless deaths of thousands of innocent people, what can a good policeman do, or what can a good Filipino do? Or facing Vladimir Putin's cataclysmic actions, what can a good Russian soldier do, or what can a good Russian do?

In the case of Lt. Hermes Papauran, arguably the Philippines' greatest investigator, he becomes the Philippine Eagle, the endangered giant bird, inhabiting the deep mystery of a cold case he has been trying to solve for years. It can be his Freudian act, finally acknowledging the discomforts the case has wrought on his being, and so taking refuge on the wings of a moribund species. Or it can be just a performance art, acknowledging one of the incarnations of Esmeralda Stuart, the major persona of the cold case.

In the universe of great investigators, acknowledgment is one imperative attribute, a unique and seminal openness to details, to nuances, to jazz, to poetry, to melodrama, to philosophy, to truth.

Great investigators are obsessive visionaries. And they are human beings.







## DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Lavrente Indico Diaz aka Lav Diaz is a filmmaker from the Philippines born on 1958. He is especially notable for the length of his work, his films not being governed by time but by space and nature. His work mostly deals with the social and political struggles of his motherland. Since 1998 he has directed eighteen films, and won numerous international awards including the Locarno Golden Leopard (*FROM WHAT IS BEFORE*, 2014), the Berlinale Alfred Bauer Silver Bear (*A LULLABY TO THE SORROWFUL MYSTERY*, 2016) and the Venice Golden Lion (*THE WOMAN WHO LEFT*, 2016).



## DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

- 2023**      **ESSENTIAL TRUTHS OF THE LAKE**  
*Locarno, Competition*
- 2022**      **WHEN THE WAVES ARE GONE** (Kapag Wala Nang Mga Alon)  
*Venice Film Festival, Out of Competition*
- 2020**      **GENUS PAN** (Lahi, hayop)  
*Venice Orrizonti Award winner, BFI London Film Festival*
- 2019**      **THE HALT** (Ang Hupa)  
*Directors' Fortnight Cannes Film Festival*
- 2018**      **SEASON OF THE DEVIL** (Ang Panahon Ng Halimaw)  
*Berlinale, Competition*
- 2016**      **THE WOMAN WHO LEFT** (Ang Babaeng Humayo)  
*Golden Lion winner Venice International Film Festival*
- 2016**      **A LULLABY TO THE SORROWFUL MYSTERY** (Hele Sa Hiwagang Hapis)  
*Silver Bear winner (Alfred Bauer award) Berlinale*
- 2014**      **FROM WHAT IS BEFORE** (Mula sa Kung Ano ang Noon)  
*Golden Leopard winner Locarno Film Festival, Film Independent Spirit Awards, Toronto International Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam*
- 2013**      **NORTE, THE END OF HISTORY** (Norte, hangganan ng kasaysayan)  
*Un Certain Regard Cannes International Film Festival, Karlovy Vary International Film Festival*
- 2012**      **FLORENTINA HUBALDO, CTE**  
*Toronto International Film Festival, Rotterdam International Film Festival*
- 2011**      **CENTURY OF BIRTHING**  
*Venice Film Festival Grand Jury Prize, Rotterdam International Film Festival*

- 2011**      **WOMAN OF THE WIND** (Babae ng Hangin)  
*International Film Festival Rotterdam*
- 2008**      **MELANCHOLIA**  
*Orizzonti **Grand Prize** Venice Film Festival, Rotterdam International Film Festival  
Thessaloniki International Film Festival*
- 2007**      **DEATH IN THE LAND OF ENCANTOS**  
(Kagadanan Sa Banwaan Ning Mga Engkanto)  
*Venice Orizzonti **Special Mention** Award Venice Film Festival,  
Toronto International Film Festival, Rotterdam International Film Festival*
- 2006**      **HEREMIAS, BOOK ONE: THE LEGEND OF THE LIZARD PRINCESS**  
(Heremias, Unang Aklat: Ang Alamat ng Prinsesang Bayawak)  
***Special Jury Prize** (Fribourg International Film Festival), Cinemanila IFF*
- 2004**      **EVOLUTION OF A FILIPINO FAMILY** (Ebolusyon ng Isang Pamilyang Pilipino)  
*Toronto International Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam,  
Hong Kong International Film Festival, Vienna International Film Festival*
- 2002**      **JESUS, REVOLUTIONNARY** (Hesus Rebolusyunaryo)  
*CPHDOX Festival*
- 2002**      **WEST SIDE KID** (Batang West Side)  
*Hong Kong IFF, Karlovy Vary IFF, Raindance Film Festival*
- 1999**      **NAKED UNDER THE MOON** (Hubad sa Ilalim ng Buwan)  
*Berlin International Film Festival, Singapore International Film Festival*
- 1999**      **BURGER BOYS**
- 1998**      **CRIMINAL OF BARRIO CONCEPCION**  
(Serafin Geronimo: Kriminal ng Barrio Concepcion)  
*Toronto International Film Festival, Chicago International Film Festival,  
Busan International Film Festival*



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